DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 401 CS 503 038

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TITLE Crisis of Public Broadcasting Japan's Case.
PUB DATE Sep 80
NOTE 17p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Institute of Communications (Ottawa, Canada, September 7-11, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Broadcast Industry; *Financial Support; Foreign Countries; Program Descriptions; *Public Agencies; *Public Support; *Public Television; Radio
IDENTIFIERS *Japan

ABSTRACT

The public broadcasting service in Japan, the NHK, is a nongovernmental, noncommercial, and nonprofit making organization that is financed solely by fees collected from viewing households. At present, 80% of the total number of households in Japan have a contract with NHK and 96.5% of these households have actually paid the receiving fee to NHK. As a broadcasting organization, NHK is one of the world's largest in scale with five radio and television channels, more than 60 program producing and material gathering stations, more than 3,000 transmitter sites, and more than 1,680 programs produced and broadcast each week. A crisis in financing has arisen as expenditures are rising with inflation and income from receiving fees from new sets is decreasing. NHK is working hard at building audience support for both programing and continued fee payment as a method of continued financing for the public broadcasting service, although some audience resistance to this method is being evidenced. The NHK is focusing on continued cooperation with the national government and will strive to maintain its independence without reducing program hours or production. (MKM)

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Crisis of Public Broadcasting

Japan's Case

by

Chosei Kabira

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A. Introduction

1. Complexity of Definition of "Public broadcasting"

NHK has, within its organization, two separate research institutes - the Radio & TV Culture Research Institute and the Public Opinion Research Institute, with a total staff of 150. Since 1978, a 'Public Broadcasting Study Group' comprising researchers from these two Institutes has been continuously conducting studies and research about the current condition of public broadcasting systems of other countries and the problems facing them. So far, the group has already published 17 reports for use within the organization.

Within one of these reports is a table entitled, "Comparison of Characters of Public Broadcasting Organizations of the World", in which are given comprehensive and concrete comparisons, with respect to ten different aspects such as form of management, financial sources, programming and audience, of seven public broadcasting organizations of the world, viz., those of Britain, West Germany, France, Canada, Australia, the United States and Japan.

From this table, we can understand the difficulty of defining the term 'public broadcasting', as a system distinctly different from the 'market-oriented broadcasting' system or the 'government-controlled' system. Lord Briggs calls it a 'broadcasting enterprise managed by public corporations' or simply as 'public-service broadcasting system', however the term, 'public broadcasting', cannot have a definition that is theoretically applicable on a universal basis. Hence, there appears to be no alternative but to indicate our tacit understanding of the differences of circumstances in each country by mentally prefixing the word "so-called" everytime we use this term of 'public broadcasting', and accept it as it is.

The public broadcasting services existing in the world today may be divided into a number of different categories. First, by financial sources: those operating with the government grant, receiving fee(license fee) and advertisement income as the financial sources; those financed with the government grant and advertisement income; and those which depend solely on either the receiving fee or the government grant. Second, can also be classified according to the form of management; some are public enterprises while others are a corporate body under the private law or the "etablissement public", operating with government funds. Third, also differ with respect to the process of appointment of their respective heads; some of them have a chief executive officer appointed directly by the government, while others are independent from the government in that their head is appointed by a Board of Governors who, in turn, are appointed by the government. In this respect, NHK, the public broadcasting service of Japan, is a 'non-governmental, non-commercial and non-profit making public broadcasting

organization' which is financed solely by the receiving fee which, under the Broadcast Law, NHK collects by itself.

Perhaps any issues we discuss may be better understood if we are careful to remember the wide differences in types of public broadcasting represented here.

2. Broadcasting in Japan Today

In Japan, the radio broadcasting was inaugurated in 1925 by NHK. In 1951, the radio broadcasting of this country entered the era of a 'dual system' in which the public and the commercial radio station operated side by side. In 1953, when both the public and the commercial broadcasters started television services, the Japanese broadcasting was ushered into a period of constant and remarkable growth, in the number of radio and TV receiving sets, in that of broadcasting stations, in programming hours and the number of programs produced and broadcast. And in the 1970s, the broadcasting of Japan - both in radio and TV - reached a saturation point.

NHK, as a public broadcasting service supported by the 'receiving contracts' concluded with 80% of the total households in the country and by the 3.4 million dollars it receives in receiving fees, conducts radio and TV broadcasting for nationwide reception and shortwave radio service to the world. With a total work force of 16,500 and through the nationwide outlets including the Broadcasting Center in Tokyo, seven regional headquarters stations in the major cities and 60 local broadcasting stations, NHK operates on two TV networks and three radio networks(2 AM and 1 FM) for domestic broadcast, and one shortwave radio overseas services which are conducted for a total of 37 hours a day in 21 different languages. The five domestic networks alone transmit as many as 1,685 radio and TV programs a week for a total duration of 637 hours.

From an optimistic point of view, we might say that we have now entered an 'era of affluence' with respect to broadcasting. At present, in eight major cities and their vicinities where 70% of Japan's population is concentrated, people can select programs from more than six channels on their home TV receivers. In programming hour, a total of 108 hours of programs are broadcast on any day of the week, and they are all televised in color. Statistically speaking, all the households throughout the country each own a TV set and approximately a half of them each own two sets. As of March 1980, the 'confirmed' TV ownership ratio - if we are to use the total number of TV 'receiving contracts' concluded between each household and NHK as the confirmed number of households owning a TV set - would be 80% of the total number of households in Japan. And 96.5% of the TV-owning households have actually paid the receiving fee to NHK.

If the term "era of affluence" is inappropriate, the term of "era of overmaturity" may be more to the point. As a matter of fact, under the capitalistic free economy and with the freedom of speech and expression fully guaranteed, the Japanese broadcasters, public as well as commercial, generously supported by the rapid growth of economy that continued until the beginning of the 1970s and particularly helped by the remarkable development of the electronics industry, kept on producing programs in enormous quanitity and competed keenly with one another for audience shares. Perhaps as a result, of the sheer quantity demanded they came to produce more and more programs that some critics say are so poor inquality, vulgar in content and lacking in uniqueness, and an increasing number of public voices have come to be raised against the wastefulness, degredation, indolence and arrogance on the part of the TV broadcasters.

B. Continuing Issues

1. Building Financial Stability

Under the Broadcast Law, NHK is given the task of ensuring that its broadcasts reach every corner of the country. At the same time, the Broadcast Law gives NHK the right to collect the receiving fees from every TV viewing household which owns a TV set. Hence, NHK employs 3,250 staff members - which is close to 20% of the total number of NHK's employees - and 4,000 non-regular members to deal with the audience-servicing work including technical improvements of reception, as well as the door-to-door collection of the receiving fees. While the fee-collection in some of the distant areas is commissioned to post offices, it nevertheless is not a collection system relying on either the government or any outside organization. Fortunately, some 40% of the TV viewing households are paying the receiving fees by automatic bank transfer, that is, the TV viewer having a deposit account in any of the city banks is to entrust the bank to pay the receiving fees out of his bank account each time the invoice is sent him through the bank. Furthermore, 47% of the TV viewing households are paying NHK in advance and in a lump sum to cover either six months or one year, in which case a discount of 10% is applied. Such viewers as mentioned above are the people who, as the nucleus of the supporters of public broadcasting, have been contributing a great deal to the reduction in the cost of fee-collecting.

One of the uniqueness of the Japanese receiving fee system is that a TV-receiving household concluding a receiving contract with NHK is obligated to pay the prescribed amount within the prescribed period but no penalty is imposed in case of non-payment. Even if one must admit that a huge amount of effort is put by NHK into the door-to-door collection of the fees and into the persuasion of those reluctant payers, it is indeed a marvellous phenomenon that such an enormous number of households as 28 million are actually paying the fees and with a

considerable voluntariness. In terms of monetary figure, NHK's average daily income amounted last year to 585 million yen or 2.65 million US dollars. And as a result of the increase in the receiving fee that became effective as from the start of the current fiscal year in April, this daily income would further rise to an average of 748 million yen or 3.4 million dollars.

On the other hand, the commercial broadcasting companies totalling 110 that are operating under licenses granted on a regional basis have been doing even better; during the last year, they earned 4.5 times as much as what NHK received in receiving fee. The four 'key station' broadcasting companies in Tokyo alone - who provide the network member stations with the programs and the advertisers - earned twice as much as the total amount of NHK's income from the receiving fees.

Since 1973, when the 'oil shock' suddenly hit Japan and the world, inflation has kept advancing and has been given additional momentum by the continual raise in oil prices, thus ushering in the worldwide low-growth era. This economic slowdown gave a particularly hard blow to the public broadcasting services throughout the world. Some of them had themselves divided into a number of smaller organizations, while others were obliged to change their financial sources from receiving fees to government grants. In some countries, the government or the parliament came to insist on playing a greater role in the decision of the amount of the receiving fee, with the result that the 'securing of financial sources' and the 'establishment of independence' have faced a crisis.

The first signs of a financial crisis appeared to NHK at the beginning of the 1970s when the nationwide ownership of TV receiving sets neared the saturation point. Particularly with the slowing down in the increase of color TV receivers, NHK's income from receiving fees hit the ceiling in the fiscal 1973 and thereafter, while, in the wake of the 'oil shock', the cost of commodities continued to soar to such an extent that NHK was obliged to operate at a deficit as a result of the sharp increase in production costs which could no longer be covered by the income. Consequently, NHK had to take necessary steps to stabilize its finance by raising, under authorization by the National Diet, the amounts of the receiving fees - which had been left unchanged for eight years since 1968 - by 54% for the color sets and 33% for the monochrome sets. And earlier this year, four years after the last revision, NHK was again placed in a position where it had to make another increase in the receiving fees; by 24% for both the color and the monochrome.

The rate of increase of TV receiving households kept slowing down during the recent years, with the result that the total amount of NHK's income in TV receiving fees has been increasing only by 2% or so a year. In contrast to such a slowdown in the increase in income, NHK's expenditures have

kept on rising at a rate of more than 10% each year, due to inflationary rise in wages and materials. Under such circumstances, it has now become inevitable for NHK to raise its receiving fees at an interval at least of three to four years.

In order to have its receiving fees revised, NHK is required, under the Broadcast Law, to first prepare a draft budget incorporating the fee increase and have this draft budget approved by the National Diet. Regarding this draft budget, neither the government nor the National Diet has the right to alter any part of it. Only the right to approve or disapprove the draft budget in its entirety is accorded to the National Diet, but to no one else. At the time the 1976 NHK budget incorporating a fee increase was deliberated at the National Diet, questioning on the floor by both the ruling and the opposition parties was unusually persistent, while the newspapers and public opinions raised loud voices of criticism against NHK. However, in the case of the fee increase which was proposed by NHK this year, the understanding of the TV viewers in general was obtained without as strong a criticism as was showered on NHK on the previous occasion in 1976. This was partly due to the fact that the rate of increase was small in comparison with increase in public utilities, perhaps, the main reason was that NHK had done all it could to carry on preliminary campaigns appealing the need of the fee increase, as well as to strengthen its public relations activities in an effort to promote the people's understanding of NHK's broadcasting activities.

In any case, NHK, which had long enjoyed the adequate financial support of the receiving fee income during the years of high economic growth, thus found itself turned into an organization operating in deficit. As a result of this drastic change in its financial position, NHK increasingly felt the urgent need of further strengthening its relations with the TV audience and of raising the efficiency of its organization and management. And in order to achieve such objectives, NHK further reinforced its policy to face the TV audience with sincerity and modesty, ready to do everything possible to obtain understanding and support of the general TV viewing public and the Diet.

2. Increasing Rationalization of Operation

As a broadcasting organization, NHK is one of the world's largest in scale, in the size of the broadcasting networks(five radio and TV channels, with over 60 program-producing and material-gathering stations and over 3,000 transmitter sites), in the number of programs produced and broadcast each week(1,685) and with a total of 20 offices overseas. While its broadcasting activities have grown year after year in dimension and complexity, the total work force of 16,500 regular staff members has been kept at the same level during the past eight years since 1972. This can perhaps be regarded as the result of NHK's

efforts to ensure the proper use of the precious funds provided by the viewers in the form of receiving fees. In an effort to modernize its management and to raise the efficiency of its operations, NHK did everything in its power to prevent any further increase in personnel expenses; this included the establishment of separate subsidary organizations to have them each handle various types of work in the periphery of program production, the auxiliary work related to audience servicing, the work of promoting the primary and secondary uses of programs broadcast by NHK, and the work to ensure the health and welfare of the NHK employees, and so forth. The computerization of accounting and of program-making and broadcasting is another of the major efforts made by NHK in the same direction.

Establishment of subsidiary organizations and their effective use:

1. NHK Publishing Company, a foundation(1931)
2. NHK Symphony Orchestra, a foundation(1942)
3. NHK Health Insurance Cooperative(1943)
4. NHK Service Center, a foundation(1951)
5. NHK Mutual Aid Association, a foundation(1955)
6. NHK Welfare & Cultural Association, a social welfare corporation(1960)
7. NHK Art Center, Ltd.(1961)
8. NHK Gakuen School, an educational foundation(1962)
9. NHK Promote Service, Ltd.(1977)
10. NHK Bunka(Cultural) Center, Ltd.(1978)
11. NHK International, a foundation(1980)

The various artistic groups, such as the chorus groups, drama troupes and orchestras, which used to be attached to some of the major regional broadcasting stations, were dissolved in two years from 1964, after a series of turns and twists. Also, apart from the subsidary organizations listed above, NHK in 1974 provided the basic fund of 12 billion yen to establish the Hoso-Bunka Foundation(HBF). This is the first and the only existing independent foundation of its kind in the world which, in this era of slow economic growth, has been playing a truly remarkable role in the promotion of the 'broadcast culture' of Japan and the world.

Adoption and utilization of computers: During the period from 1962 to 1968, NHK devoted its efforts to the computerization of broadcasting business by the adoption of a huge scale EDPS, which was the first-ever attempt to be made in the field of broadcasting. The adoption of the EDPS was undertaken by NHK with a number of ambitious objectives, viz., to raise the management efficiency by preventing the further increase in the needs of funds and personnel; to effectively coordinate the ever-expanding and increasingly complex broadcasting business as represented by the enormous number of TV receiving contracts totalling more than 20 million; to properly coordinate

the allocation of program production resources; and even to fully automatize the transmission of programs. At present five series of large-scale computers are in operation, taking good care of the daily management of audience servicing, accounting, staff administration, programming and engineering. Those computers are also effectively used in conducting public opinion surveys, as well as the minute-by-minute reports on the results of a general election.

Efficiency of staff administration: While taking full advantage of the merits of the 'lifetime employment' and 'seniority system' which are typically Japanese labor customs, NHK constantly endeavors to develop the individual abilities of staff members under a 'promotion system' which requires every member of NHK's staff to undergo a regular series of appraisal and training given them in the course of their employment with NHK before he or she is given a promotion. The organizational structure itself is very flexible. For example, instead of what may be called a vertical division of work where one group of people work only for radio and the other only for TV, a 'horizontal' arrangement is applied in which the staff members are divided into groups formed by the type of program they deal with, as, for instance, educational, cultural, entertainment and news & current affairs. And each of these groups, or divisions, handles all the programs of that particular category for broadcast on any of the five radio and TV services. Whenever there is a plan for a special project, the necessary number of persons with the desirable ability and skill are recruited to form a team, regardless of the sectional borders.

With regard to the salaries for NHK employees, we must admit that what an average NHK worker receives in salary is considerably below those of the newspaper comapnies or the thriving commercial TV stations. Yet, recently there hardly has been a case of an NHK employee being lured away by any of the commercial stations with an offer of higher salaries or positions.

In spite of the substantial increase in the volume of work since 1972, NHK has managed to prevent the total work force from increasing by raising the efficiency of as many kinds of work as possible. From 1976 to 1978, NHK succeeded in reducing the number of staff members by about 500 and a plan is now underway towards further reduction; 600 during the coming three years and 1,200 within the next five years.

There is no doubt that, from now on, the people will become increasingly critical of NHK and its activities and, on the other hand, NHK will have to respond to such critical eyes of the people by promoting the intensity of dialogues with the people as radio and TV audiences. So, even if NHK has to be prepared for the need of further increasing the efficiency of its operation, it must constantly be on its guard against going to excesses in reducing in costs or economizing on various

aspects of business, lest such excesses may endanger the existence of NHK itself. Following are some of the items on which a tacit consensus exists within NHK as being the limits for its efforts toward enhancement of efficiency:

1. The decrease in income will not immediately lead to the shortening of programming hours or reduction in program production.
2. Separation and independence of the two TV channels, three radio channels and the overseas shortwave service will result in inefficiency instead of contributing to the enhancement of overall efficiency.
3. NHK should, in principle, produce the programs by itself and should not resort to the convenience of commissioning program-making to outside productions, with the possible exception of special kinds of programs such as animation programs.
4. Collection of receiving fees by NHK's own hands should be maintained as the fundamental method of fee collection. A method that depends entirely on a government department or an outside organization should not be adopted.
5. Strengthening and expansion of regional or local programming will be further promoted; no further attempt should be made towards a centralized system.

3. Building Audience Support

The programs broadcast by NHK on its domestic networks may be roughly divided into four categories; news and current affairs, entertainment, educational and cultural. The educational programs(37%) are the largest in percentage and followed by the cultural programs(27%), the news and current affairs(19%) and finally, by the entertainment programs(17%). As can be seen from these percentage figures, NHK may be described as a broadcaster that aims at maintaining richness and balance in programming, in contrast to the commercial broadcasting companies whose major concern is apparently to achieve highest possible rating for their programs. In other words, NHK regards its programs as primarily cultural products rather than commodities for sale. Each member of the audience, for NHK, is the supporter of public broadcasting and is never just a constituent of the audience rating.

Some differences in their views about the programs are reflected in those of the 'images' held by the audience with respect to the ratings and to the stations. According to the audience rating survey conducted in June this year in the Tokyo area on a weekday, NHK came on top of the list, surpassing five commercial stations, in the daily average rating. This was mainly due to NHK programs' overwhelming popularity in the morning hours but, even in the night-time programming, NHK has

come to compete increasingly favorably with the commercial stations and is now often one of the top three in rating. Such a remarkable climb in popularity may be attributed to the fact that, whereas NHK in the past had to be content with 4th in the popularity ranking in the night-time programming, the production staff, under the stimulus of a sense of crisis threatening the public broadcasting, endeavored to put maximum creative efforts into the production of fine drama and documentary programs suitable for broadcast in the prime-time.

In 1977, NHK Public Opinion Research Institute conducted a survey on 'people's sense of reliability' on various organizations, by distributing a questionnaire to 3,600 men and women of 20 or more in age. The result was roughly as follows:

		Reliable	Unreliable
1.	NHK	84%	7%
2.	Local government offices or town offices	77	16
3.	Newspaper companies	72	17
4.	Police stations	71	19
5.	Judicial courts	65	18
6.	Commercial broadcasting stations	64	24
7.	National Diet	40	48
8.	Labor unions	38	40
9.	Government	37	52
10.	Big business firms	26	53

Despite such an enormous reliability enjoyed by NHK, a public opinion survey conducted by NHK Public Opinion Research Institute showed that one third of the people surveyed were found to regard NHK as a semi-governmental organization and only 27% of the respondents checked the right answer that NHK is a 'non-profit making, special public organization'. As if to reflect such a state of affairs, NHK is sometimes criticized as being bureaucratic, authoritarian, ethnocentric or elitist and is apt to be shunned politely by the general public.

As long as the people are living under a thriving economy and the amount of the receiving fee they are required to pay is such as not to be so burdensome, the people are seldom tempted to take uncooperative attitude toward a public broadcasting service in so far as that public broadcasting organization does not commit a notable blunder in its broadcasting services. In view of its long history in a door-to-door fee collection system, NHK has always devoted its effort to the establishment of good relationship with the viewers and listeners.

However, as the nation's economy gradually slumped and various citizens' movements gained momentum with the enhancement of peoples' sense of human rights and awareness in their respective positions, a remarkable rise of people's interest

and concern was seen not only in the question of receiving fees but also in the public broadcasting service in general, including the content of programs and the way the public broadcasting organization is run. As a matter of fact, such a nationwide surge of the voices of the audience is reflected in the more than 12,000 phone calls, letters and visits, NHK receives each day from people asking various questions, expressing wishes, giving opinions, making complaints and criticisms of NHK and its activities. Some express a decision against concluding an NHK receiving contract which obligates payment of the receiving fee. The number of people refusing to conclude an NHK receiving contract as at the end of March 1978 was 84,000 and this figure rose further to 96,000 as at March 1979. And as at the end of the last fiscal year(March 1980), the number was found to have reached 100,000. Meanwhile, the number of non-payers has also been on the increase; these are the cases where a TV owning household, while duly concluding an NHK contract, keeps on refusing payment on one pretext or another. The number of such cases as of March 1979 was 854,000, which rose as of March 1980 to 980,000. This, incidentally, accounted for approximately 3.5% of the total number of households of 28 million which have concluded a TV receiving contract and which are liable for payment of fees to NHK.

While the current monthly amount of receiving fee of 880 yen is still only one third of that of a major daily newspaper and 67% of the admission for a first-run movie, it has now become an amount that would impose quite a burden on the payer because of the fact that the fee collection is done on a bimonthly basis. Moreover, with the large number of commercial TV services operating side by side with NHK, a feeling of irrationality which some people had harbored at the back of their minds kept on surfacing and added fuel to their frustration of being denied the right to a say in the management of NHK. Indeed, we cannot overlook such psychological and emotional aspects of the general public when we deal with the question of audience relations. Under the circumstances, in order to secure the further understanding and support of the TV viewers, NHK must continue to do all it can to strengthen its public relations and promotional activities.

In 1976, the Publicity Promotion Headquarters was newly established within NHK as a task force to conduct overall coordination of functional activities to publicize and to promote viewing of NHK programs. This year, in an effort to reinforce its organizational structure, the Headquarters of Audience Relations was set up by enlarging the above-mentioned Publicity Promotion Headquarters. This signifies the birth of another major headquarters, in addition to the General Broadcasting Administration, the Headquarters for Technical Administration & Construction, General Administration of Audience Services, and the Staff Administration.

For many years, NHK has consistently endeavored to grasp the correct picture of the radio and TV audience as a whole by all conceivable means. In addition to the various types of scientific and objective methods of surveys undertaken regularly by the NHK Public Opinion Research Institute, NHK has continously made promotional efforts through the following activities(in fiscal 1978):

Audience Advisory Council - since the first Council was established in 1976, the number was increased year after year and now there are a total of 53 Councils in 53 locations throughout the country which meet regularly three times a year to hear opinions about all aspects of NHK's activities from a total of 1,000 Council members selected from among various occupational fields.

An Audience Relations Center or a section is established at each of the 69 broadcasting stations of NHK to maintain close relations with the respective local viewers/listeners. The number of phone calls, letters or visits received from the viewers/listeners in a single year totalled more than 4,469,000.

Audience Forums - met a total of 1,745 times throughout Japan, participated in by a total of 80,000 people.

Broadcast Utilization Groups - totalling 799,000 people.

Total number of people that attended one or the other of the many NHK-sponsored shows or cultural meetings - 6.52 million.

Number of visitors to NHK program publicity exhibitions 6.52 million.

Visitors to NHK broadcasting stations - totalled 2.98 million.

Visitors to NHK Hall, Tokyo - totalled 574,000.

4. Maintaining Independence of Public Broadcasting

Inasmuch as a broadcasting organization is engaged in business under government license to use the frequencies, it is constantly required to maintain relations with the government with respect to specific kinds of business. Moreover, a public broadcasting organization is given the responsibility to perform what is known as 'public accountability' towards the audience. It is from such a point of view that, in Japan, NHK as the public broadcasting organization is required by the law to submit its draft budget and the closing accounts to the National Diet for deliberation and approval in order to ensure that the people's intentions are duly reflected upon NHK's broadcasting activities.

Under the Constitution which provides for the 'guarantee of the freedom of expression', the relationship between the government and NHK is governed by such adminstrative measures as are represented by such terms as the designation, authorization, directive, request, licensing, supervision and opinion by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, and these administrative measures are prescribed under 20 items covering such matters as the business of the enterprise, the broadcasting facilities, finance and receiving fees. In these are included the Finance Ministry's authorization for NHK to issue Broadcast Bonds and the provisions about the Board of Audit's auditing of NHK's financial activities.

It is undeniable that such relationships of NHK with the government offices may give the wrong impression to the general public that NHK must be a state-operated or a semi-governmental public organization.

The Article 3 of the Broadcast Law, which guarantees the freedom of editing of broadcast programs, says, "Broadcast programming shall not be intervened or regulated by anyone, unless such intervention or regulation is conducted in accordance with an authority as provided for by the law". The laws providing for such authorities refer to the Election Act for Public Offices, the Environmental Pollution Prevention Act, the Basic Act on Countermeasures against Natural Calameties, the Weather Service Act, etc. Apart from these laws, no one, not even the National Diet or the government, has the authority to intervene in broadcast programming.

However, now that broadcasting has become something so close to the people's life that a daily average of three hours and more are spent or TV viewing, the people's desire, their complaints, praises and grievances directed to broadcasting, particularly to NHK as the public broadcasting, have been increasing proportionately. NHK in the recent years has been increasingly inundated with requests, made in an invisible as well as visible form, from the political parties, political groups and all other kinds of the so-called 'pressure groups', as well as from the consumers, citizens' groups, industrial and labor groups.

In view of all these mounting pressures, NHK as the public broadcasting organization has to undertake the ever-increasing responsibility of maintaining the firm attitude in carrying out its duties of ensuring fairness in commentary and news-reporting. It must always pursue the truth, contribute to the enhancement of people's welfare, and help promote further development of democracy, sometimes bravely resisting pressures and sometimes firmly adhering to a critical attitude. And at the same time, in response to the ever-changing demands from the audience.

In addition to lending an ear to whatever the people have to say, NHK must endeavor to give appropriate feedbacks, while giving a clear-cut and persuasive 'No' to those who make excessive and unreasonable requests or who come up with impossible demands.

C. Future Issues of Public Broadcasting

The year 1980, in fact, turns one of the important pages in the history of public broadcasting in Japan. To list a few numerical figures of significance, this is the 55th anniversary of the beginning of public broadcasting in Japan, the 30th anniversary of the enactment of the Broadcast Law that contributed to the postwar democratization of broadcasting in the war-torn country and brought into reality the 'dual system' in which the public broadcasting and commercial broadcasting were to enjoy a peaceful coexistence, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the NHK Technical Research Laboratories which contributed to the development of Japanese electronics industry and to the enhancement of the levels of broadcast technology in this country and the world and - if we are to add one more - the 20th anniversary of the start in Japan of the color TV services.

Mr. Tomokazu Sakamoto, the president of NHK, called the 1980s the "new period of fruit-bearing for the technological innovations." The practical broadcasting satellites, the TV sound multiplex broadcasting, the still-picture broadcasting, the high-definition television, the facsimile broadcasting -- these are just a few of the examples that are joining one after another in the ever-expanding family of broadcasting.

Meanwhile, the Japanese government has been making steady efforts to prepare for the start of the University of the Air, a Japanese equivalent of the Open University of Britain. This, when it is eventually realized, will bring about a basic change of enormous dimension to the broadcasting system of this country. When it is realized, Japan will become the second country in the world, next only to Brazil, to have a 'triad' system. In addition to the public broadcasting service financed by receiving fees and second, the commericial broadcasting services relying on advertisement revenue, the Japanese people is going to be served by a third system which will be a state-operated broadcasting organization funded with revenue from tax paid by the people themselves. As the University of the Air is gradually developed on a nationwide level, the impact it will have on NHK will naturally be immense.

With such circumstances in mind, NHK has recently established the "NHK Long-range Vision Council" as an advisory organ to report directly to the president of NHK, which will make multi-purpose studies of the long-range vision for NHK as a public broadcasting organization. The Council consists of 21 members each of whom represents a different occupational field; seven of them are university professors and the rest are people with various occupations such as authors, critics, businessmen, organization representatives

and even a president of a commercial broadcasting related company. Following are some of the questions that Mr. Sakamoto has put to the Council for study and deliberation:

- The mission and the role that NHK will be requested to play in the society in the 1980s.
- The broadcast service as it should be in the future; how best can NHK respond to the needs and wishes of the people?
- The relationship as it should be between the people and NHK, with a view to guaranteeing an 'open' management of a public broadcasting organization.
- The financial source, as it should be, to support the management of NHK.

The Council is scheduled to submit its report to the NHK president by early 1982 and the outcome will provide an important guideline for NHK in carrying on its future business.

From an independent point of view, on two occasions in the past, NHK set up an 'NHK Basic Problems Study Committee', a group similar in nature to the above-mentioned Council in its objectives, and the reports submitted to the then NHK presidents by these Committees consisted of outside men and women of learning and experience were duly reflected in the management of NHK.

Meanwhile, on the side of the government, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in July this year established a Study Conference that consisted of 15 men and women of learning and experience to have them consider the diversification in broadcasting. The Ministry, earlier in 1962, established an 'Extraordinary Study Committee on Broadcast-related Legal Systems' as an advisory organ for the Minister for Posts and Telecommunications and, on the basis of the report submitted by that Committee, introduced a bill proposing an overall revision of the Broadcast Law to the National Diet. However, owing to a number of problems involved, the bill was shelved. In view of this bitter experience, the Ministry, while admitting the need of reassessing the broadcasting system, has since become extremely cautious in dealing with every aspect of this question. In fact, the said Study Conference of the Ministry whose term of office is set at one year is not asked to examine the legal aspects of the question as a main theme of study.

In closing this brief report, I should like to quote from the opening address given earlier this year by Mr. Tomokazu Sakamoto, president of NHK, on the occasion of the ceremony to

commemorate the 55th anniversary of the beginning of broadcasting in Japan.

"The deeper we find ourselves plunging into what is variously called an 'era of changes' or an 'era of uncertainty', the higher shall we raise the torch of Public Broadcasting with the unflinching determination to overcome all difficulties that may await us in our future path. We will do everything in our power to contribute to the promotion of people's happiness and to their brighter future through our continuous efforts to safeguard the freedom of speech, as we keep on advancing with our eternal trust in mankind."